

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 (currently amended): A fluid sampling probe for aspirating fluid samples comprising:
a first portion for piercing a closed fluid carrier,
a second portion serving as a reservoir for receiving a fluid, the second portion being
formed integrally operative with the first portion for piercing the closed fluid carrier, and
a third portion providing fluid communication between the first and second portion.

2 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second portion comprises a
disposable ~~moulded~~-molded reservoir having a capacity sufficient for containing at least one
sample volume of fluid.

3 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 1-~~or 2~~, wherein the first portion comprises
the piercing head of a relatively small diameter hypodermic needle.

4 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 3, wherein the needle gauge of the
hypodermic needle is in the range of 12-20 AWG.

5 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 2, ~~3 or 4~~, wherein the disposable reservoir is
joined to the first portion by a UV cured adhesive joint such that the probe forms a disposable
combination for single use.

6 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 3, ~~4 or 5~~, wherein the second portion
comprises a disposable ~~moulded~~-molded reservoir of one of a plurality of sizes to accommodate
a range of sample volumes.

7 (original): A probe as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first portion is moveable with respect to
the second portion such that, upon disengaging with the second portion, a fluid flow path from
the carrier to the second portion is formed between a distal end of the second portion and the
head of the first portion.

8 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim ~~4 or~~ 7, wherein the first portion comprises the head of a trocar needle.

9 (original): A probe as claimed in claim 8, wherein the second portion comprises a cannular needle for accommodating a relatively small diameter shaft of the trocar needle therewithin such that the second portion is defined by a wall of the cannular needle acting as an outer envelope for the received fluid.

10 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to~~ 9, wherein the second portion is a hollowed vessel.

11 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to~~ 6, wherein the probe is disposable.

12 (currently amended): An automated fluid sampling system comprising:

a handling mechanism for conveying a plurality of closed fluid carriers;
a fluid sampling station for receiving and locating the fluid carriers conveyed by the handling mechanism, and wherein the system is adapted to operatively accommodate at least one fluid sampling probe as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11 including
a first portion for piercing a closed fluid carrier,
a second portion serving as a reservoir for receiving a fluid, the second portion being formed integrally operative with the first portion for piercing the closed fluid carrier, and
a third portion providing fluid communication between the first and second portion.

13 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in ~~any one of claims 12, 1 to 6 or 11~~ wherein the second portion is adapted at one end thereof to form a mechanical connection between the fluid sampling probe and ~~a the fluid sampling system as claimed in claim 12.~~

14 (original): A probe as claimed in claim 13 wherein the second portion comprises a Luer fitting for forming the mechanical connection between the fluid sampling probe and the fluid sampling system.

15 (currently amended): A method of sampling a fluid from a closed fluid carrier using a probe including a first portion for piercing a closed fluid carrier, a second portion serving as a reservoir for receiving a fluid, the second portion being formed integrally operative with the first portion for piercing the closed fluid carrier, and a third portion providing fluid communication between the first and second portions ~~as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11~~, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) piercing the closed fluid carrier with a portion of the probe;
- (b) advancing the first portion of the probe into contact with the fluid of the carrier;
- (c) forming a fluid flow path between the fluid of the carrier and the second ~~and/or third~~ portion of the probe;
- (d) aspirating a ~~sample~~ volume of the fluid along the fluid flow path;
- (e) retaining the ~~sample~~ volume of fluid within the second ~~and/or third~~ portion of the probe upon withdrawal of the probe from the carrier.

16 (original): A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein a trocar needle is used for step (e).

17 (currently amended): A method as claimed in claim 15 ~~or 16~~, further comprising the step of:

- (f) using the probe to dispense at least one ~~the~~ sample of fluid as required.

18 (currently amended): A method as claimed in claim 15, ~~16, or 17~~ further comprising the step of:

- (g) disposing of the fluid sampling probe.

19 (original): A method as claimed in claim 18, further comprising the step of:

- (h) exchanging the disposed probe with one of a plurality of probes having a range of second portion sizes and/or shapes, and;
- (i) repeating steps (a) to (g).

20 (original): A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein, step (c) further comprises the step of axially extending the first portion from sealed engagement with the second portion to form the fluid flow path.

21 (currently amended): A method as claimed in claim ~~15~~^{or 20} wherein, step (e) further comprises the step of axially retracting the first portion to sealingly engage the second portion prior to withdrawal of the probe from the carrier.

22-30 (canceled)

31 (currently amended): A system as claimed in claim 12 wherein the sampling probe comprises a trocar needle having a head and a shaft, the shaft being hollow for enclosing at least one sample volume within and for dispensing the at least one sample as required.

32-33 (canceled)